

What the Church Is Not

The following extract from a sermon by E. P. Marvin, at Rochester, N. Y., deals with a very practical problem, and will no doubt be read with interest.

"And Fair and Festival—frolics untold,
Were held in the place of prayer,
And maidens bewitching as sirens of old,
With worldly graces fair,
Invented the very cunningest tricks,
Untrammelled by Gospel Laws,
To beguile and amuse and win from the world,
Some help for the righteous cause."

"The church is not a house of merchandise, a bureau of amusement or a social club. None of these things are nominated in her joint high commission, and her franchise does not contemplate in leadership the executive ability of a railroad president for administration.

"Individually, her members may earn money in any honest way, but corporatively they have nothing to do with money but to receive freewill offerings as an act of worship, and transmit them to the proper objects. We are plainly taught by precept and example, from the building of the Tabernacle, from Genesis to Revelation, that God approves only one method of raising money for His cause, and disapproves this amusement and merchandise industry.

"Christ twice purged the court of the temple of merchandising. What would He now say and do if He were to return and see the huckstering, junketing, vaudeville and flim-flam of modern churches?

"It is no function of the blood-bought church to entertain or amuse anyone, either with legitimate drama, Bible scenes or the degrading vaudeville of the world. Christ and His apostles never dreamed of putting the Gospel on stage exhibition, or of making its administration an amusement for lost men."

"What a contrast between these modern societies, so largely engaged in giving fairs, suppers and popular entertainments, and the apostolic churches.

"The less piety a church has, the more oysters, ice cream and fun it takes to run it, and the faster it runs from God. The church is not to cultivate the social element, in the realm of worldliness, and thus paralyze its spiritual life. These festal scenes of carnal revelry and ungodly mirth, are the apostasy of the primitive Agapæ and of the Methodist love feast. This carnality and frivolity is a part of the last prophetic apostasy. How degrading to the church and destructive of its saving influence!

"We need a new crusade, not to rescue the Holy sepulchre from the Turk, but to rescue the Holy Place from the caterer and showman. Away with this amusement heresy and cooking-stove apostasy! Do not drag the royal robes of the expectant Body of Christ thro a defiling church kitchen.

"The early church 'held the young' by spiritual forces alone, and in the face of flames and lions. The Puritan and all the reformed churches of Christendom held the young better than now, before they ever em-

ployed these meretricious attractions of the world. Spiritual forces are the strongest of all. Christ said: 'And if I be lifted up will draw all men unto Me.'"

THE MINISTRY OF AFFLICTION

W. ALBERT WELTY

"Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have kept thy word," were words of David, who knew what the severest trouble was. An old Puritan once said, "God's people are like birds; they sing best in cages, they sing best when in trouble." This seemed true of David, the more he was afflicted the nearer heaven he seemed to soar in his psalms. The deeper the flood was upon the earth, the higher the ark went up. So it is with the children of God, the deeper their sorrow and the severer their affliction, the nearer God they go, if they are near the great high Priest who ever liveth to make intercession for them. Troubles have sometimes been called weights, and weights generally keep us to the earth, but by the use or application of certain laws weights may be made to lift you. So it is possible by the law of intercession, to cause our afflictions to lift us near to God. What real pleasure the Christian has when in deepest sorrow to mount upward on the wings of faith into the secret of His presence who has healing in His wings.

Tho this world is full of affliction and sorrow, what a blessing to know we have access in Christ to the wings of the Almighty. Now and then the frost of time nips the loveliest flower from the home and sorrow fills the mother's heart. No earthly comfort can console, but with steadfast step she treads up the familiar pathway, "a new and living way" into the presence of God who turns her sorrow into joy and hope. Wherefore let us glory in tribulations "for our light afflictions * * * worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." Do we hear the sweet voice of Jesus calling us o'er the tumult, over life's wild, restless sea, saying, "Christian follow me." Never is there a cloud so dark, but what behind it is shining the Son of Righteousness.

If in affliction we have not learned to whom to go we have not found the secret of the blessed life, or of abiding in Christ.

The Sunday School

HOME CLASSES

MRS. J. M. WEST

The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.

We cannot consider the subject of Home Class work and its place in the church until we first consider the church and its present way of working. In Christ's ministry before the establishment of local churches He sent out His disciples two and two. As soon as churches were established they sent out evangelists. In this we find the keynote of the gospel plan of work. *The worker is sent.* He goes with authority and feels, as we say, "He has a backing," and that gives purpose

and courage. It is the first impulse of every converted soul to try to save others, but as churches we have no definite plan of organized evangelistic work, *with ever a vacancy in it*, by which we can say to the convert, "Will you work with this brother?" thus placing him with a worker of experience. Instead, we preach work, work, work, while the convert, from diffidence, a desire not to put himself forward, and an indistinct idea of just what ought to be done, stands still, until retrogression begins. To be sure there are a few church offices to fill, but the church with a definite and well carried out plan of evangelization is hard to find, and without this outreaching spirit the church becomes self-centered, interested in getting the biggest church, the finest choir, the largest congregation, the smartest minister, and sometimes delights to be the most stylish, or it may become an idle church, indifferent and lethargic.

He who is our example came to seek and to save that which was lost. If with His spirit we go out as He went, sinners will be won to Christ, the church will grow, eloquence will come to it, rich gifts will pour into its treasury, but the question will never be, "What more can we do for self aggrandizement, but what other soul can we save." It has been said a church is a circle, and circles can never cover the entire surface; between them there will be left spaces untouched, *which is true*. It was the realization of this great truth which led to the organization of the Christian Alliance, from which has grown other forms of interdenominational work. Just here let me say there are two words no longer needed in the Christian's dictionary; *undenominational* and *union* are obsolete, in their places has come *interdenominational*. So come into its spirit, the spirit of Christ must come into our hearts when we shall all be one in Him. We must recognize ourselves all members of one body, each member having its own office, and that if one member suffers all suffer. Our different denominational names must no more cause us to subvert these great truths than the different names of the several parts of the body removes the obligation of one member to another. Because the hand has its own name, shall it refuse to serve the mouth, or for like reason shall the eyes refuse to serve the feet? We are all one body in Christ Jesus, members one of another. Look not every man on his own things, applies to churches as well as to individuals, and this brings us back to the first thought, the sending out of the disciples two and two. It is not feasible for each individual member of the church to make a journey of inquiry into every home in the neighborhood, neither can the most be accomplished by a person going wholly on his own account, so wisdom and experience have devised the present plan of house to house visitation, now well understood; but how to gather the fruit of this labor is not so well understood. From the visiting committee the pastor receives the list of those who prefer his church and